



THE LOGIC OF REVOLUTION IN POPULAR FORM: NOTES ON 'REBELLION OF THE SLOGANS'

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2017-2023: *THE BIRTH OF A NEW CYCLE OF STRUGGLE*

The onset of the 2017-2018 uprisings, which “[represented a watershed moment in the history of the Islamic Republic](#)”, when millions of proletarians across the country in more than 100 cities rebelled against the ruling oligarchy, saying ‘enough is enough’ to a life governed by misery, precarity, dictatorship, Islamist autocracy, and authoritarian repression”, marks the beginning of a revolutionary period in the process of its realization; of realizing both the possibility of social transformation as well as this periods attendant forms of collective subjectivity. Put another way, from 2017 to the still ongoing Jina Revolution, Iran has seen a new cycle of struggle characterized by nationwide rebellions whose size and militancy increases with each successive year — 2017-18 saw mass [protests](#) in 160 sites; 2019 saw mass [protests](#) in 180 sites; Jina Uprising, protests occurred in more than 412 [locations](#).

In the spring of 2018, Iran’s southwest province of Khuzestan saw mass demonstrations and protests by the regions majority ethnic Arab population against a water shortage whose severity was rivaled only by the regions air pollution and the Islamic Republic’s continued prohibition on the cultural and linguistic practices proper to Khuzestan’s Arab communities. In the months that followed, workers at the Haft-Tappeh Sugar Cane Factory in Shush (4500 employee) and workers from the National Steel factories in Ahvaz (4000 workers) would go on strike—with steel workers organizing solidarity strikes with the workers at the Haft-Tappeh factory while chanting “death to this demagogic government”—while truck drivers self-organized a series of coordinated strikes that would spread to all thirty-one of Iran’s provinces by the end of the year. Of equal, if not greater, significance is the composition of the strikes carried out by workers from the Haft-Tapeh Sugar Cane Factory and National Steel during the first two weeks of November of the same year. More than the simple

demonstration of a certain degree of fidelity to struggle at the site of key productive sectors of the Iranian economy, these were strikes composed and sustained by the involvement and participation of the family members of striking workers largely comprised of women and children — i.e. the conjugation of reproductive and productive subject-positions vis-à-vis the accumulation of value.

With each successive wave of protest and strike, and in tandem with struggles against economic immiseration, participation and demands were increasingly issued from groups whose social existence has been subjected to the vicissitudes of both privatization and corruption—e.g. university students, human rights activists, political prisoners, local shopkeepers, teachers, as well as the country's marginalized ethnicities (e.g. Kurds, Baloch, Arabs). And of the various chants heard in the streets during 2017-2018 uprisings, '*Bread, Work, Freedom*' is the slogan that retains the greatest significance despite the fact that its political content ultimately remained reformist in character (e.g. demands for improvements to working conditions, the increase in wages, and the deprivatisation of the Iranian economy). If the uprisings of 2017-18 can be characterized by a wave of national rebellion whose modalities of struggle were largely militant and based on practices of direct-action but whose political horizon still remained within the purview of a struggle for the recognition of one's rights, the same can not be said for the uprisings of 2019-2020 during which the IRI was

...encountering ever-increasing struggles and movements of workers, students, teachers, retirees, women, and ethnic and religious minorities. These two 'levels' of struggle—the spontaneous mass uprising and the more organized forms

of resistance—are mutually interrelated. The former has radicalized the latter making it more political than before. For instance, the demands of some parts of the working class have moved away from the improvement of the conditions of work, wages, and de-privatization and towards the autonomous management of factories and radical alternatives. Collective 98, ['On the Anniversary of the 2019 November Uprising in Iran'](#)

It should come as no surprise, then, that with this notable increase in the specific determination of freedom at the heart of the concrete demands, the slogans from 2017-2018 would modify themselves in turn. In contrast with the previous years' most popular slogan of '*Bread, Work, Freedom*', from 2019-2020, people took to the streets chanting, '*Bread, Work, and Workers' Councils*' and '*Bread, Work, and the Right To Wear Anything You Want.*' And yet, as with every escalation of tactics on the part of protestors, the strategy of counterrevolutionary reaction followed in the shape of the 2020 February elections. Regarding the significance of the elections in light of the previous years of revolt, one comrade put it best:

Note that today, the so-called rivals in the previous presidential elections are the heads of the executive, judiciary, and legislative administrations. The February elections marked the ending point in this integration process—which does not mean that their internal conflict of interests is solved, of course. The heads of the three branches have already made extrajudicial decisions, one of which was the increase in petrol prices last November

[2019] that resulted in an unprecedented national uprising and a bloodbath in which protesters were killed. 'Iran: The Is an Infinite Amount of Hope... but Not For Us,'

In the year that followed (2021-2022) Iran's provinces of Khuzestan and Isfahan would return to the streets in mass demonstrations against the lack of access to water as well as a series of strikes by project-workers at key oil refineries among whose demands were several months of wages they had yet to receive, thus giving rise to the popular slogans of this period: '**The prices are in Dollars; our wages in Rials**'; '**No to forced displacement**' [كلا كلا للتهجير]; '**No to humiliation**' [هيئات من «الذلة»]. On the heels of this year of struggle waged within both processes of production and circulation, in April 2023, Iran's growing teachers movement took to the streets and whose demands pertained to both economic and extra-economic concerns—e.g. the right to teach specific curriculum, the right to teach in languages other than Farsi, the ability to create adequate learning environments for students, as well as teacher's wages.

This annual wave of rebellion would culminate in what is now known as the Jina Uprising, or the 'Women, Life, Freedom' [**Jin! Jijan! Azadi!**] Movement after Iran's morality police murdered Jina (Mahsa) Amini while she was in police custody. To make matters worse, on 30 September, "security forces in Zahedan, the capital of Sistan and Baluchistan Province and home to the long-oppressed Baluchi minority, cracked down on protesters. Security forces killed at least 94 people, including children, and wounded at least 350. The incident, which is the deadliest day since the beginning of recent nationwide protests against the Islamic Republic, has been called 'Bloody Friday.'" During these early days of the Jina Revolution, when streets were filled with slogans announcing the solidarity among

Iran's historically marginalized ethnic and social groups — *“Zahedan, Kurdistan, the eye and light of Iran”, “Kurd and Baluch brothers, rise [up] and overthrow the mullahs”, “Rise up Baluch your good days are coming”, and “Kurdistan is not alone; Baluchistan is its supporter”* — what became clear was the fact that, with the Jina Revolution, the situation on the ground was one in which “the Islamic Republic is already dead in the minds of its people; now the people must kill it *in reality.*”

Despite this all-too brief survey of political unrest, what is clear is that 2017 marks the beginning of a two-fold dynamic of resistance and mobilization against the processes of both production and circulation and their attendant mediation of the Iranian nation-state. This is a dynamic characterized by strikes in key productive sectors of the Iranian economy (largely undertaken by the most precarious and marginalized workers such as project-workers in Khuzestan's oil industry and Baloch miners) and by the mass withdrawal from participating in the reproduction of the established order; a generalized practice of dis-identification with the social-functions individuals have been compelled to assume, whose most recent and uncompromising figure has come in the form of the Jina Revolution (teachers movement, self-organized national strikes by truck drivers, women's removal and burning of their hijabs in protest of the laws surrounding its compulsory use, and so on); transforming the generalized practice of refusing to identify with the social-positions currently in existence into a refusal of one's continued complicity with a regime whose commitment to their future prosperity can only take the form of a false promise.

Put in the most general of terms, what has become clear is that, ever since 2017, Iran has become an exemplary laboratory of what becomes possible when both production *and* circulation struggles are coextensive, simultaneous, and guided by a militant sensibility toward a shared practical problem—*how to reproduce one's*

social existence without reproducing the accumulation of value in the hands of the suicidal state of Iran? By virtue of this question, those who have taken to the streets have effectuated the means of discerning the really-existing possibility of revolution that currently inheres within this still ongoing cycle of struggle. Since, simply posing this question is already to inquire into what one intuits every day on the streets and grasps with the certainty of feeling that, “it is only in an order of things in which there are no more classes and class antagonisms that social evolutions will cease to be political revolutions. Till then, on the eve of every general reshuffling of society, the last word of social science will always be: *Struggle or death; bloody war or nothing. It is thus that the question is inevitably posed.*”

And so, even from the most cursory of surveys regarding the forms of organization and modes of struggle employed by each respective social group over this six year period, the period between 2017 and the present marks a qualitative break with seemingly all prior cycles of struggle and protest ever since the 1979 Revolution, for both those in Iran and in the diaspora. What is more, it is a period whose historical and material reality serves as the basis upon which revolutionary theory can orient itself in the direction of historical and nascent modes of struggle/forms of organization; thereby, allowing for (i) the collective *articulation* of a set of theoretical commitments and relations of solidarity across social differences and (ii) the collective practice of *theoretically* grasping the salient determinants constitutive of the structuring dynamic specific to this cycle of struggle. And with the Jina Revolution, collective modalities of antagonism have grown increasingly uncompromising in their refusal, announcing themselves through a series of slogans that have since become household phrases the world over: ‘***Bread, Work, Freedom; Jin, Jiyan, Azadi.***’ Conversely, when seen from the vantage point of the Islamic Republic, slogans such as these indicate a really existing, material threat to the very reproduction of the Iranian State—precisely

because one of the ongoing concerns of the regime has been securing the smooth transition in selecting the next Supreme Leader. As one comrade put it in the wake of the February 2020 parliamentary elections:

The unified conservative parliament is one of the pieces of the puzzle in the “transition period,” referring to the selection of the next Supreme Leader. And the puzzle is a unified conservative government, homogeneous enough to ensure that the transition to the new Supreme Leader goes smoothly. The parliament, all the institutions of the so-called “republic,” and its representation apparatus are all defunct. The crisis in the Islamic Republic is no longer about “legitimacy” — it is a crisis at the roots of governmentality itself. ‘Iran: The Is an Infinite Amount of Hope... but Not For Us,’

From the stolen elections in 2009 and Council appointed Khamieni allies, and alongside the regime’s brutal repression in response to the Jina Revolution, what we are witnessing is the constitution of a political force “that appropriates the state and channels into it a flow of absolute war where the only outcome is the suicide of the state itself” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 231). For both the protestors in the streets and the regime’s functionaries in the halls of parliament, the current conjuncture is one of “transition” such that the present, once more, becomes the temporal modality of the struggle to determine the shape of Iranian politics to come. That said, it is still to the credit of the IRI for openly confirming the public-secret at the heart of their historic mission of statecraft: to be governed by the IRI is to be subject to a regime that can *neither*

govern without the looming specter of civil war *nor* maintain any pretension to being a good faith interlocutor; to be subject to so many policies of biopolitical management by the guardians and owners of repressive force such that, if there is anything governmental regarding the IRI it is the banal, but no less barbarous, fact that it is the government of the living by the (politically) dead.

SLOGANS AND OTHERMOTS DE DÉSORDRE

Against this historical backdrop, the cardinal epistemic virtue of *Rebellion of the Slogans* is its successful articulation of the following thesis: the period between 2017-2023 is defined by the decomposition and recomposition of popular rebellions and state-sponsored immiseration, marking the emergence of a new cycle of struggle in Iran. It is an historical period of struggle narrated in the transformation of the 2017 slogan '***Bread, Work, Freedom!***' to the 2019-20 chant '***Bread, Work, and the Right To Wear Anything You Want,***' and then into the watchword of the eponymously named 'Women, Life, Freedom' Movement: '***Jin Jiyan Azadi / Zan Zendegi Azadi.***' Neither exhibition nor archive, *Rebellion* is perhaps best understood as a kind of 'prolegomena' on the present and future of Iran's current cycle of struggle.

Following from, and inspired by, Mohammad Mokhtari's seminal taxonomy of political slogans in the wake of the 1979 Revolution, and by virtue of documenting slogans from the past six years of a nation in revolt, *Rebellion* features slogans that — and documented, organized, translated, and presented in a limited-run, publication form — allow us to grasp the possibility of revolution in its most palpable manner: whether in the form of graffiti or protest chants, each slogan is indexed to a generalized refusal and a qualitative transformation in the political sensibilities of various forms of social *protagonism*. However, unlike Mokhtari's work of classification and its aim of reconstructing the relationship between

slogan and the subject of which it is the utterance, *Rebellion* maintains the anonymity of the author/speaker of any given slogan. The decision to proceed in this manner, however, is not primarily based on formal, curatorial, or aesthetic commitments. By retaining the anonymity of its subjects, *Rebellion* asserts that the *political* significance/content of a given slogan is not to be found in the character of its author, but by virtue of the fact of their circulation in public space. In making themselves public, a series of political (dis)positions are made readily visible and may be assumed by anyone who recognizes something of themselves in a bit of paint on a wall or a simple turn of phrase. For *Rebellion*, it is the fact that slogans “make movement” that remains of decisive importance:

[C]apable of finding, for moments, common vectors of meaning, effectively bringing together the movement's action and, at the same time, understanding that this terrain on which we fight consists of the multiplication of dissimilar situations, of diverse landings...the slogans that make movement (here I am reformulating the idea of the Chilean feminist Julieta Kirckwood (2022) who speaks of questions that made a movement) is a decisive point. Slogans have a spatial and temporal validity, but their force lies precisely in connecting bodies and statements. When we read slogans that make sense across borders, they indicate dates (in which those words express a moment) and bring together theses that organize a way of understanding what happens and even orienting it [...] In all of them we find a set of unique elements that express very specific conjunctures that, at the same time, are able to be almost immediately translated into others. They express,

without a doubt, incorporeal transformations that are translated into ways of experiencing violence, self-defense, insecurity, collective force, the dispute over everything that makes up the perseverance of living in increasingly urgent contexts. These slogans imply transformations in bodies, they materialize thresholds in links, they propose a collective horizon. And they do not lose their relationship with that common plane of the reproduction of life. Verónica Gago, 'Is Politics Still Possible Today?', [*Crisis & Critique*, vol. 9.2.](#), (97-98).

As with any given period defined by the most uncompromising insurrectionary fervor, to study the slogans of a given cycle of struggle is to study the extent to which its modes of collective antagonism encourage or restrain those collective forms of militant refusal as well as the very possibility of revolution itself. Anonymously authored, slogans register what has become a really existing, practical, political position one can assume vis-à-vis the Iranian State. Thus, to study revolutionary slogans, or slogans originating from an intense period of insurrectionary revolt, is to study the modalities of collective action made possible in moments when a real, material, rupture is effectuated by a collective political subject in the process of its realization:

Tracts, posters, bulletins, words of the streets, infinite words—it is not through a concern for effectiveness that they become imperative. Effective or not, they belong to the decision of the instant. They appear, and they disappear. They do not say everything; on the contrary, they ruin

*everything; they are outside of everything. They act and reflect fragmentarily. They do not leave a trace: trait without trace. Like words on the wall, they are written in insecurity, received under threat; they carry the danger themselves and then pass with the passerby who transmits, loses, or forgets them.***[Maurice Blanchot, [Tracts, posters, bulletins], Political Writings: 1953-1995, 95. Emphasis added]**

To study revolutionary slogans is to embark upon a study of the possible since “*the only mode of presence of revolution is its real possibility*” (ibid).

As with every moment of upheaval where the character of the Revolution has yet to be determined—Islamic, Constitutional Monarchy, Communist/leftist—the Jina Revolution tempts historical comparison: in the immediate aftermath of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, “tens of thousands of women marched in the streets of Tehran against the imposition of compulsory Hijab, chanting ‘**Neither headscarf nor beatings for wearing it**’ [ته روسری نه نه توسری] and ‘**We did not make a revolution to go back**’—referring to the reactionary aspect of compulsory Hijab that aims to “turn back” the wheels of history. At the time, the Islamist media and Khomeini labeled the feminists and other women on the streets as supporters of imperialism who subscribed to ‘Western culture.’ Tragically, no one heard the women’s voices or heeded their warnings, not even the leftists who—catastrophically—accorded an ontological priority to the struggle against imperialism, relativizing and downplaying all other forms of domination as ‘secondary.’ Today, when women burn scarves on the streets and the whole society emphatically rejects compulsory Hijab, this shakes the entire patriarchal and

autocratic authority to the core, along with the pseudo-anti-imperialist legitimacy of the Islamic Republic.”

Given the months following the initial uprising, we seem to have entered a period that is comprised of “the most motley mixture of crying contradictions.” However, for better or worse, *the 25th of Shahrivar was no 18th Brumaire*; with the former inaugurating a period of struggle whose first law is *absolute refusal*; wild, inane agitation, not in the name of tranquility/civil peace, but against the tranquility on whose behalf every reactionary campaign is waged; truth alloyed to passion, passion as the alloy for truth; heroic deeds without need for heroes; historical events in the process of writing their own history and whose first declaration is thus: we are still not living through the coronation of Pahlavi the younger. As for collective will, it can be found in those moments where both protestors and events no longer appear as shadows divorced from their bodies; this revolution does not paralyze its own bearers for it is that by which revolutionaries are made. It is easy to spot these bodies in the midst of their *becoming-revolutionary* by virtue of a common identifying feature: moving in public space with a certainty of purpose despite any guarantee of the revolution’s successful outcome.

With the extra-judicial killing of Jina (Mahsa) Amini, this exigency of breaking with the past did not even need to be said since its unanimity was felt by every person who has taken to the streets. Hence the threats posed to the regime appear in what once were simple, innocent, acts of tradition: a procession of funeral-goers, whose hope for emancipation now lies in a liberated Kurdistan and “dressed in dark clothes” appear to the regime as an “army of undertakers...[as] *revolutionary undertakers*” coming to celebrate the martyrs second life within the heart of a people-to-come. In this night where all mourners are dressed in black, the really existing possibility of revolution no longer appears in the red ‘Phrygian caps of anarchy’ or the White of Pahlavi’s (counter-)Revolution, but in the *thawb ḥaddādof*

Kurdish Pallbearers.¹ With the Jina Revolution, this new cycle of struggle pronounces its judgment of the IRI while asserting a general theory of Iranian society by means of slogans, which engender its *logic in popular form*.

COUNTER-MEMORIES AGAINST THE STATE

In light of *rebellion of the slogan's* propaedeutic function, two sets of responses to the work are worth noting since each, in their own way, engage with the central methodological question that guides the work: is it possible to narrate history via slogans? If so, what *form* must such narratives assume in order to avoid both left-melancholia and the demobilizing affect of resentment? Regarding the former, *rebellion's* interlocutor proposed that the slogans from 2017-2023 initiated a process of constructing the archive of a history of rebellion, itself continuously threatened with erasure. And with respect to the politics of memory proper to the IRI, erasure is made permanent precisely because the very conditions for historical remembrance are replaced by the institutional compulsion toward the memorization of an 'official history' whose function is nothing short of the continued legitimation of the IRI itself. Or as they put it, "mnemonic manipulation is a defining characteristic of the Islamic Republic's politics of memory." Thus, absent any extant archive documenting the history of resistance to the regime from its very inception, one finds the sufficient ground for unearthing the very history that the IRI seeks to liquidate in slogans themselves: collective expressions of a life beyond economic and extra-economic domination. And so, when protestors chant "**40 years of crime, death to this leadership!**" it is a call against the IRI's politics of denial and enforced amnesia," such that, "the slogans of the Jina Revolution" are themselves "counter-memories" against the State. It is here, then, that the 'narration' of history via slogans becomes the narration of the tradition of all those oppressed by the Islamic Republic.

If slogans function as weapons of counter-memory during this current cycle of struggle, the second set of remarks inquired into whether or not the question of the relationship between historical narration and slogans can be similarly approached via images—i.e. can images, particularly images of resistance that repeat over time, serve as the pretext for the narration of the history of the oppressed? With a brief survey of various images and videos of women removing their hijabs in public in an act of protest against the IRI, between 2017 and the present, there emerges a collective figure specific to this cycle of struggle. And with the Jina Revolution, each iteration of a woman taking off her hijab in public reaches an intensity that belongs to a long history of the desire for liberation proper to the history of feminism in Iran. By surveying the archive of images of women's resistance, one discovers that certain images and figures similarly function as the sufficient ground for the retelling of the history of the oppressed. Thus, the constant and systematic erasure of counter-memories of rebellion, whether as images or slogans, constitutes one of the founding acts of the IRI vis-à-vis its project of establishing and reinforcing a triumphalist narrative regarding the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the significance of which should not be underestimated.²

Kurdistan: *the graveyard of fascists*

In a letter dated on 29 December 1978 from Khomeini and addressed to Mehdi Bazargan,³ the soon to be Supreme Leader placed Bazargan in charge of establishing an "Oil Strikes Coordinating Committee" (OSCC) since, "Khomeini was worried the Shah would use the fuel shortage to legitimize the crackdown of the revolutionary movement."⁴ In the first weeks of January 1979, the OSCC would publish their first communique, announcing that it has become "necessary to bring to the attention of the defiant nation of Iran that the blue-collar and white-collar workers responsible for effecting the Imam's directives, are *pious strikers*

who are working in the production units and the refineries for the welfare of the defiant nation and have no intention to gain anything for themselves.”⁵ Thus, the establishment of the OSCC constituted a crucial turning point in the 1979 Revolution and “represented the attempt by the Islamist forces [...] to take control of the oil strikes at the expense of the autonomy of oil workers.”

More than forty years later, striking oil workers no longer lay claim to the virtue of *piety* and openly espouse the revolutionary content of their *impious* strike *against* the Islamic Republic. When oil workers organized a solidarity strike in light of the regime’s brutalization of young students across the country, one did not hear chants of *piety* but rather slogans such as ‘*This is the year of blood!*’. And what is more impious than demanding the blood of the Supreme Leader? If, in 1979, the funeral was a site of the revolution’s co-optation by Khomeini and his supporters, today the IRI no longer finds any would-be supporters at these funeral processions transformed into sites of protest ever since the beginning of the Jina Revolution. And if, in 1979, oil workers’ slogans “began to merge with those of Islamists” before and during the oil workers’ strikes, which were crucial for the overthrow of the US-backed monarchy of Reza Shah Pahlavi—such that one could hear pro-Islamist slogans chanted by oil workers who marched “to the Behesht Zahra [in Tehran], where the martyrs of the revolution were taken to be buried”—it is now but a common occurrence to hear funeral attendees chant the properly revolutionary slogan: ***Kurdistan is the graveyard of fascists!***

Notes

1. What is known as the ‘White Revolution’ refers to a series of socio-economic reforms proposed and implemented by the Shah of Iran between the years of 1963-1979, the most notable policies of which dealt with land and agricultural reforms and whose color designation, ‘White,’ was intended

to signal the 'bloodless' nature of this 'revolution'. Ali M. Ansari perfectly captures the context informing the choice of title (Revolution) and color (White) when he writes, "Asadollah Alam, the leader of the Mardom Party, was clear about the political imperative when he first suggested the concept of a 'White Revolution' as a vehicle for the Shah in discussions with a cautious Sir Roger Stevens in 1958. In the aftermath of the Iraqi *coup d'état*, Alam argued that a 'White' (i.e. bloodless) revolution was needed in Iran if the Iraqi coup was not to be repeated in Iran" ('The Myth of the White Revolution,' 5). For more see: Ali M. Ansari, '[The Myth of the White Revolution: Mohammad Reza Shah, "Modernization" and the Consolidation of Power](#),' *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.37.3, July 2001, 1-24.



2. "[T]he Islamic Revolution of 1979 and its regional aftershocks brought to a close the anticolonial age of national liberation inaugurated by the Egyptian Free Officers in 1952, nearly thirty years earlier. What took place in Iran proved that Islam, to the chagrin of a couple of generations of modernization theorists, could be an endogenous revolutionary force. Why go to Marx, a nineteenth-century European thinker, when you could politically mobilize the masses through their own autochthonous tradition? [...] From the 1980s onward, the stark secular/religious and modernity/authenticity binaries would come to replace the earlier multiplicity of ideological shades [...] The fracturing of the Marxist ground of total emancipation from colonialism and imperialism, economic exploitation, and tradition split the inheritors into those...focusing on geopolitical analysis (game of nations), the balance of powers, and imperial intervention (external causes), and those emphasizing culture, sectarianism, and religion as the internal impediments to progress (internal causes). In the splitting of the Marxist inheritance between culture and geopolitics, the socioeconomic question found no heirs." (Fadi Bardawil,

Revolution and Disenchantment: Arab Marxism and the Binds of Emancipation (Duke University Press: 2020), 171-73)



3. Mehdi Bazargan (1907-1995): liberal-religious leader of Freedom Movement of Iran (FMI) appointed by Khomeini to head Iran's Provisional Government after the fall of the Pahlavi Monarchy, and collaborated with Khomeini supporters and successfully managed to marginalize the left within the composition of pre-Revolutionary 'Oil Strikes Coordinating Committee.' As Peyman Jafari helpfully recounts, "In Ahwaz, 35% of the delegates of the strike committee that oil workers had elected in November 1978 were "Marxists." However, after the fall of the monarchy, the supporters of Khomeini, in coalition with [...] Mehdi Bazargan who headed the Provisional Government, maneuvered to marginalize the left and organized new elections, in which the left gained 15% [...] It is important to note...that most of the Islamist members of the strike committees and, later, the Islamic *shoras* (councils) belonged to the 'leftist' faction that supported workers' self-management. Soon after the revolution in 1979-1981, these strike committees clashed with the newly state-appointed managers, a conflict that led to the repression and dissolution of the *shoras*." (Peyman Jafari, 'Fluid Histories: Oil Workers and the Iranian Revolution,' *Working for Oil. Comparative Social Histories of Labor in the Global Oil Industry* (Palgrave Macmillan: 2018), 69-98, 73)



4. Peyman Jafari, 'Fluid Histories: Oil Workers and the Iranian Revolution,' *Working for Oil. Comparative Social Histories of Labor in the Global Oil Industry* (Palgrave Macmillan: 2018), 77.



5. Quoted in 'Fluid Histories,' 79. The narrative here ignores, however, a crucial fact: how in its lifetime, OSCC was turned into a place for myriad

forms of precarious workers and official employees of a company who are not anymore under labor law or considered workers but office employers so they can't strike. Moreover, regarding the intra-class stratification of oil workers, it is important to note that project-workers are workers whose terms of employment are precarious, part time, and/or based on a "zero hours" contract. Project workers, moreover, are "blue collar" workers insofar as they are not directly employed by the National Iranian Oil Company, for whom the term "white collar" is reserved. For more on the differences between these kinds of workers, see "[The Bitter Experience of Workers in Iran—On the Oil Workers Strike in Iran—A Letter from Comrades,](#)" *Angry Workers of the World*. (9 July 2021). Accessed on 3 June 2023.

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